

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO+JULIET

Original Text

The Prologue

Scene—Verona; Mantua.

Enter Chorus.

CHOR:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes (5)
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
Doth, with their death, bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage, (10)
Which, but their children's end, naught could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

Exit.

Modern Translation

CHOR:

Two families, the same in almost every respect,
In the town of Verona, Italy, where this play is set,
Continue an old feud with new breakouts of violence,
Involving and killing citizens outside the families.
The son of one family and the daughter of the other,
Having become lovers, commit suicide,
Following a series of events that keep them apart.
Their deaths cause the families to end the feud.
The events that lead to their suicide,
As well as the continuing feud between the families,
(which nothing but their children's death could end),
Will now be performed on this stage for two hours.
If you listen to the play attentively, any details you
Missed in this introduction, will be explained as you watch
the play.